



# Peer Programs: Tips for Planning/Implementing Within Your Student Mini-Grant Proposal

“The most important part of being a member of our AODA Program is making an influence on my other peers and underclassmen.”



A recent review of literature conducted by the Academy for Educational Development Evaluation & Consultation Center revealed that peer-led education programs can be effective in reducing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug (ATOD) use among youth. These programs have also shown to have a positive impact on the peer educators themselves, increasing their knowledge and self-efficacy, as well as influencing health risks behaviors.



“I’m involved because I want to help younger student stay on the right track and feel comfortable and confident.”

## High Quality Peer Programs Should:

- Be based on a solid foundation in social learning and social influence theories that address how learning and behavior change occur on the individual level and within social networks;
- Use interactive, developmentally appropriate teaching methods that emphasize experiential learning rather than the presentation of information only in a didactic manner;
- Utilize class-sizes that are conducive to small-group instruction;
- Use follow-up sessions to update and reinforce original program content;
- Be provided to more than one class;
- Be well organized and be conducted in an organized manner;
- Be implemented by peers who present the curriculum in an interesting, dynamic manner; or
- Be delivered by a skilled adult or peer leader, competent in group processes.

“I like being a peer educator because it puts together a group of caring, involved students to help others.”



Student mini-grants are a peer-based approach to ATOD prevention. They are an important part of a K-12 comprehensive program. The following recommendations should be considered as you plan your student mini-grant proposal.

“The most important part of our peer program is that we help people understand what we’re doing and what they should do.”

“We help others understand that things that happen and can happen to one person can happen to others.”



## Tips for Designing Peer Involvement Programs

- Clearly define the target population, in terms of age, ethnicity/race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and life experiences, and select peer educators and peer leaders accordingly. Example: Peer leaders are nominated by their classmates. Adult advisors make sure leaders are representative of the diversity of the student body.
- Articulate program philosophies, goals and objectives, and use these priorities to guide program design. Example: If your program focuses on the prevention of risk behaviors or the maintenance of healthy behaviors, select peer leaders who can serve as positive role models for the other students.
- Determine the roles and responsibilities of peer educators. Example: When implementing peer education programs, youth may have the sole responsibility to deliver instruction but development of the curriculum is a shared responsibility between youth and adults.
- Ensure program goals are consistent with the setting or location of the program. Example: School-based programs are an efficient way to reach large populations of youth. Schools are well suited to providing prevention-focused knowledge and skills to general populations.
- Provide the necessary resources. Example: Peer educators need appropriate training in the content area, teaching strategies, facilitation, and communication skills.
- Ensure that the person who coordinates the program understands the value of peer programs and is committed to working with youth. Peer-based interventions require involvement from adults for supervision, quality assurance, coordination, guidance and other types of support.
- Prepare for peer educator and staff turnover. Peer educators may have high turnover rates due to schedule conflicts, other academic and or extra-curricular activities, or graduation from school. Adult coordinators will most likely have a number of other responsibilities. Example: Some program coordinators recruit new peer leaders as part of the program delivery.
- Plan for evaluation in the time line and budget. As this review has pointed out, rigorously evaluated peer programs are lacking. Evaluations are needed to assess both the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of peer programs. Because evaluation is such an integral part of program design, evaluation plans should be defined at the very beginning of program conceptualization and necessary resources should be set aside. Example: When planning how you will evaluate the project, consider these questions:

Who is this information for, who will use the findings?

What information do we want to know?

How is the information to be used?

When is the information needed?

What resources are available to conduct the evaluation?



“What would I tell other who want to be a Peer Educator? Go for it! It’s lots of

For more information, see: Youth to Youth: A Study of State AODA Funded Peer Programs In Wisconsin 2001-02  
<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dlse/sspw/youthtoyouth>